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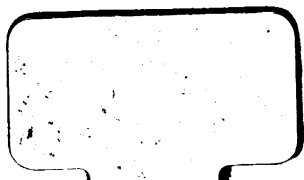
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46.

1153.



"THE DRESS-MAKER."

A PRIZE ESSAY.

"THE WHOLE CREATION GROANETH."

BY THE REV. W. M^c ILWAINE,

MINISTER OF ST. GEORGE'S, BELFAST.



PUBLISHED FOR THE ASSOCIATION,
BY AYLOTT AND JONES,
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1846.

1153

The Committee of Gentlemen of the Association for the Aid and Benefit of Dress-makers and Milliners having offered a prize of twenty guineas for the best Essay "On the Moral and Physical Evils resulting from the present Long Hours of Work in the Dress-making and Millinery Business, and on the best Mode of Obviating the same," beg to announce that the adjudicators have awarded the same to the Reverend W. M'Ilwaine, minister of St. George's, Belfast, Ireland.

. The profits arising from the sale of this Essay, will be added to the funds of the Association.

Association for the Aid and Benefit of Dress-makers and Milliners.

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The Subscriptions for the present year are now due.

INTRODUCTION.

THE Committee of Gentlemen, in publishing the Essay to which the Adjudicators have awarded the Prize offered by the Association, are anxious to prefix some considerations on the subject to which it refers ; to point out the designs and progress of the Association ; and more especially to submit to public notice the present condition of the class for the promotion of whose welfare this Institution has been established.

The severe and peculiar sufferings of the young women engaged in the Dress-making and Millinery business, had, for a long period, attracted the attention and sympathy of philanthropic individuals, when the extended Parliamentary evidence collected by the Children's Employment Commission, by presenting a startling picture of the evils attendant upon this employment, concentrated the notice of all classes of the community on a system, of which it may be said, without the fear of contradiction, that it has no parallel in the history of industrial occupations. The painful disclosures contained in that evidence led to the formation of the present Association, the objects of which are briefly as follows :—

1. To induce the principals of dress-making and millinery establishments to limit the hours of actual work to twelve *per diem*, and to abolish, in all cases, working on Sundays.
2. To promote an improved system of ventilation.
3. To aid in obviating the serious evils connected with the present system, by inducing ladies to allow sufficient time for the execution of orders, and to encourage those establishments which zealously co-operate in carrying out the objects of the Association.
4. To open a book at the office, where the names and addresses of young persons of good character and capacity will be entered, free of expense, to meet the inquiries of employers seeking additional assistance, especially in the busy season.
5. To afford pecuniary assistance to deserving young persons, in cases of temporary distress or difficulty.
6. To afford to such young persons as require it, early and effective medical advice, change of air, and other assistance, in cases of sickness.
7. To form, in connexion with the Association, a provident fund.

It thus appears that, in addition to the leading principle sought to be established—the reduction of the hours of work—the Association combines all the usual features of a charitable institution, together with the peculiar advantages of providing change of air and medical attendance, in cases of sickness, and the establishment of a provident fund, or, more correctly, a savings'-bank. During the two years and a half which have elapsed since the Association was established, the Committees have been actively engaged in giving practical efficiency to

the views of its founders. A considerable number of young persons have received advice and medicines during sickness;* to many pecuniary aid has been granted, including some cases of painful and long-continued affliction; in several instances country air and repose have been provided; and lastly, it is gratifying to add, that relief has not, in the whole of the above period, been withheld from a single individual deemed worthy of receiving it.

From this brief exposition, it will appear that all the assistance which a charitable institution is capable of affording has been efficiently administered. In considering, however, the other and more essential objects of the Association, equal success cannot be recorded. In the first place, with respect to the *Provident Fund*, although the subjoined enumeration,† and the repeated statements made at the office, afford sufficient proof that many of the young dress-makers and milliners are anxious to avail themselves of this secure and advantageous mode of investing their savings; still the number of depositors does not amount to what the great and recognised utility of such an institution ought to command. When the fearful and peculiar dangers which beset the path of the young dress-maker in this vast metropolis are called to mind; when it is recollected that many of this class are orphans, and others separated from their friends; when it is known that, at the end of each returning fashionable season, many of these young persons are cast on their own scanty resources for daily food, it cannot be otherwise than a matter of deep regret, that even partial failure should have attended

* From June 24, 1844, to the present time, 234 medical tickets have been issued. From July 1st, 1843, to March 25th, 1844, the number of situations obtained for young persons through the office, was 90. From March 25th, 1844, to March 25th, 1845, situations obtained, 316; from March 25th, 1845, to March 7th, 1846, the number was 351; total 757. Pecuniary relief has been granted in 119 cases.

† The number of depositors who have joined the *Provident Fund* is 58.

the only effectual plan, under the existing system of paying assistants, for lessening or entirely obviating the manifold evils attendant upon this precarious employment. The Committees, entertaining these views, have left no means untried to give due efficiency to the Provident Fund, by granting a bonus to depositors, and by making its existence known ;* and they trust that, in future, the heads of establishments, impressed with the responsibility of their position, will zealously co-operate in advancing an institution so highly conducive to the well-being of the young persons placed under their charge.

The essential object sought to be obtained by this Association, is the reduction of the prevailing immoderate hours of work. In thus essaying to introduce an important alteration in an extensive business, the originators of the Society were neither unmindful of the difficulties of their undertaking, nor careless of the interests involved ; scrupulously avoiding all harsh and hasty proceedings, they entertained the hope that the ameliorations so urgently demanded might be effected rather by the spontaneous efforts of the employers themselves, than by the direct interposition of the Association. The experience of nearly three years has, unfortunately, not realised this expectation. That, in several establishments, the hours of work have within that period been considerably curtailed, the Committees are happy to record ; but the duty they owe to the public demands of them the avowal, that the evil system of exacting protracted and exhausting labour still continues to a great extent.

* In the beginning of the past year, in addition to former efforts, a printed paper, containing the particulars of the Provident Fund, was sent to all the principal establishments in London, with a special request that it might be suspended in the work-room.

The Committees have further to express their regret, that the efforts made by them to introduce an effective mode of ventilation have met with so little response on the part of the employers. It may be confidently asserted, that attention to this important subject is in no case more essential than in that of the dress-makers' work-rooms. The large number of persons collected together, the many hours during which the business is carried on, the numerous gaslights or candles required at night* and the inadequate size of the apartment in most cases; these constitute a combination of circumstances which, if health is to be preserved, imperatively demands effective ventilation. This general neglect of so important a matter, and the belief, almost as prevalent, that the evils noticed are unavoidable, makes it desirable distinctly to state, that the greater portion of the long train of mischief resulting from an overheated and poisonous atmosphere can be removed by a very moderate outlay; an assertion not resting on mere theory or hypothesis, but on facts obtained from actual experience. A simple and efficient apparatus has been placed in the office, No. 13, Clifford-street, and principals and others are earnestly invited to call and inspect it, between the hours of ten, A. M., and four, P. M.†

Such being the present aspect of the question, the Committee, without pledging themselves to all the views of the Author, earnestly solicit the attention of the public to the Essay now submitted to their notice, feeling confident that the evils therein depicted have a real foundation in truth. In order, however, to prevent misconceptions, it is proper to

* Independently of the evils connected with the deterioration of the air, all artificial light is injurious to the eyes, if long exposed to it; firstly, because it is concentrated, instead of being, like solar light, uniformly diffused; and secondly, because the flame has a flickering, or intermittent motion.

† See note, p. 46, on ventilation.

state, for the information of those unacquainted with the details of the dress-making business, that there are several grades among the young persons employed ; so that, whilst many of the inmates of these establishments, apprentices, improvers, and assistants, are the daughters of clergymen, medical men, officers, &c. ; others, and especially the day-workers, belong to a humbler rank of society, and these are unhappily exposed in a peculiar degree, whilst traversing the streets of the metropolis, in going to, and returning from their employment, to the moral evils so forcibly set forth in the ensuing pages. It is also necessary to state that the Author, at the suggestion of the Committee, has made some alterations and additions in the essay, since the adjudication took place.

In conclusion, the Committee would express their fervent hope, that, to eradicate a system thus fraught with sickness, suffering, and death, all classes will unite in zealous and sustained exertions ; that those, who, as customers, are in a position to exert a powerful influence, will not withhold their assistance ; and, more than all, that the promptings of Christian charity, seconding the convictions of an enlightened philanthropy, may, at no distant period, remove what must, if knowingly tolerated, assume the character, and, with it, the responsibility, of a national sin.

THE DRESS-MAKER.

CHAPTER I.

THE AGE WE LIVE IN.

"We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."—Ephes. vi. 12.

VARIED and singular, even to a proverb, are the characteristic features of the day wherein our lot is cast; one of the most striking of which is this very variableness. It might almost seem as if what was wont to be called the march of events, in former ages, had caught the spirit of locomotion, at work among us; so sudden and almost unaccountable are its movements. What at an earlier period of our earth's history, might be calculated upon as the probable result of a century's experience, is now the product of a decade of years. We move onward from the starting point of some improved application of the hitherto almost unknown powers of a natural agent, and who can calculate either the goal to be gained, or the speed toward its attainment!

All this is fraught with interest to the eye of the philosopher, the philanthropist, the political economist; but, to the Christian, its contemplation is absorbing indeed. And why? He sees vast agencies at work in the social, moral, and spiritual worlds, as well as in the natural; nor can he,

without yearnings of solicitude, deep and awful, ponder upon the probable result of some of such power—unseen, though real—brought to bear, with sudden and uncontrollable effect, upon the minds and eternal destinies of his fellow-immortals. Assuredly, specimens of such an agency are at hand. Vast masses set in motion by some political theory—churches heaved, well-nigh to their foundations, by the simoom-blast of some doctrinal delusions over their reeling fabrics—these, and many other moral phenomena of our day, too plainly testify that “the prince of the power of the air” is now, as ever, active and energetic, astride upon the blast—willing, although (thanks to an Almighty overruling power) unable, to desolate all that is good around us.

It is, then, upon *society* that the eye of the Christian philanthropist is fixed, with the steadiest and most absorbing interest. Tossed to and fro, as is its perpetually fluctuating surface, he yet feels that it may, through the power of the Spirit from on high, yield to the influence of what is heaven-descended and pure, as well as what is earthly and evil. It is, therefore, with feelings of deep thankfulness that he witnesses the true disciples of the Cross banding themselves together for the avowed purpose of ameliorating the condition of our common humanity; and, above all, seeking to cast into those springs and sources of evil, which gush spontaneously from the soil of the naturally corrupt human heart, the healing salt of the sanctuary.

That many institutions, and truly noble ones, are at work in this wide and honourable field, is a fact as undeniable as it is encouraging; yet still there is a difference. Some of these are merely philanthropic; and, perhaps, in no higher a sense than is attachable to that ethnic, though excellent sentiment which made the walls of a Roman amphitheatre ring with plaudits, the mere echo of a *nihil humani alienum*. Let such speed on their way; we cannot but wish them a higher aim and truer motive, and, therefore, dare not impede, though we may prefer not to join them. Here, however, is the vantage-ground of true (because Christian) philanthropy. She is the child, or rather the very embodi-

ment, of holy, heavenly *Love*. Her birth-place is the sky ; her chosen field of labour is limited alone by the sins and the sorrows of our kind. Her mount of elevation is *Calvary*. There she stands, and, moulded into the feeling of Him who bled and died thereon, "for us men, and for our salvation," her undying energy is not spent for the mere alleviation of temporal sorrow ; she contemplates also eternal things ; and, while seeking to benefit and bless man's bodily concerns, labours also, and with proportionate earnestness, for his soul's good. This does she desire to do, while not leaving the other undone.

The pathway, then, of this Christian grace, and of those who are under its influence, through our world's waste, is easily discernible. They are to be found not alone, scattering the blessings of health, happiness, and comfort, the fruit of mere moral and industrial training, among our rural and civic population ; but, piercing into the deep recesses of ruin and sorrow, bodily and spiritual, and seeking to pour the only sovereign remedy, the gospel's balm, into the open wounds of sin-stricken humanity. No class of want and woe is too loathsome or too lowly for such followers of the Saviour. No field of toil, in such a course, too wide or wearisome : and hence, again, society, in all its fitful phases, is the chosen and suitable study for the Christian philanthropist.

Can we wonder, therefore, that amidst all the recesses of suffering which Christian, and even legal, scrutiny have of late opened to the eye of day, the wrongs, and wants, and woes of *woman* should have attracted peculiar sympathy ? We hail this fact as one of those dove-like messengers of good, over the bleak and dark tide of time rolling around us, in proof that justice and mercy still linger in our world. Though the love of "filthy lucre" may go hard to freeze the current of national benevolence, until all pulsations betokening life within may nearly cease ; thank God for the unspeakable blessings that such men as our ASHLEYS are still left among us : the worthy descendants, in spirit, of the WILBERFORCES of the age just gone. No longer shall it remain as a burning blight on England's national character, that while her

millions of gold have been borne over the seas to purchase the liberty of the negro, her own children were left to pine in worse than African bondage, in the very heart of her metropolis. It is high time that the light of heaven and of its truth should be let in on some of those scenes of mental and bodily incarceration which, like concealed and cancerous ulcers, lie near the very vitals of our nation's prosperity. May the Lord own and bless this humble effort, as well as the more enlarged and powerful ones in operation among us to this end!

There is one consideration which urges the pen of the writer (would it were with success and power!) in the subject before him. That consideration has been just touched on already: the object of the present appeal is *Woman*. Reader, art thou a man?—a son, therefore—perhaps a brother, husband, parent? And, oh! in which of all these, and countless other associations, does not the very naming of that word “Woman,” tell on thy heart of hearts? She bore thee, she nursed thee, she bent over thee with a thrill of tenderness, unconscious though thou wert, which finds an earthly abode in no other sanctified recess of our nature, save in a mother's breast. In thy childhood, thy youth, as sister or parent, she was the very sun-light of thy happiest, the solace of thy clouded, hours. Is thy course, now, that of a stern manhood—hast thou a home, hast thou a human heart? What is the pulse of tenderness there,—what the rainbow-streak of thy disappointed seasons—the crown and cup of rejoicing in that thy earthly sanctuary? The existence of woman there. We speak of woman as she ought to be—of woman as the God of grace creates, and new creates her.

And will men—Englishmen, Christian men—the sons, the brothers, the husbands of Britain permit this, their choicest blessing, to be rifled from them? Perish the thought! Let it be once made evident that woman is wronged, that woman is a sufferer, an unjust sufferer, a degraded being, and there are thousands, millions of Englishmen and Christians who will rise for her redress.

There is another class also to whom we would, in all

Christian affection, yet faithfulness, address ourselves ; we mean our Christian sisters—the women of England. We are about feebly, though earnestly, to plead the cause of one class of our injured fellow-countrywomen ; and we tell our British sisters that, under God's blessing, a great portion of the remedy so much needed, is in their own hands. Let but a fair and prayerful hearing be afforded to our statement, and we fear not to assert that, the Lord approving, the result will be, the moral, bodily, and spiritual emancipation of many from among the sorely-burdened daughters of our land, their own sisters holding a prominent place in their liberation.

CHAPTER II.

THE DRESS-MAKER.

"I will greatly multiply thy sorrow."—Gen. iii. 16.

"IN the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," was the minatory declaration pronounced by offended Deity over the prime offender of our race, against the law of love and holiness so wantonly and wilfully transgressed. Fearfully as our erring sire must have quailed under such a sentence, yet how would he have bowed beneath its weight, had he been enabled to foresee the self-inflicted aggravations of it under which his race were doomed to groan. Yes; and that curse of sin, with the accumulated weight of nearly thrice two thousand years, is now drinking up, not alone the sweat, but the vital moisture, the very heart-blood of thousands of the sons and daughters of Adam. Whither shall we go for a proof of this? To the slave-ship, freighted with a cargo of human wretchedness, at which the heart shudders and the cheek blanches? To the field of labour in the new world, where the fruit of the torrid soil is watered by the black man's blood and tears? Nay, fellow-Christian; the proof is nearer at hand. Come to your own gay and courtly metropolis; move through some of its fashionable lounges or promenades. See a joyous party pass to the wedding celebration, or bridal *déjeuner*, in the morning; or by night, and amidst the blaze of countless gas-lights, witness another whirling by to the opera or the ball-room; or another still, at a different period of the day, to the courtly assembly or drawing-room: the

attires of all bespeak as much magnificence, as their countenances indicate hilarity. But what is the price of all, or much, of this ? Scarce an eye rests on that wretched, meagre, woe-worn form, which steals by through the crowd, like the faded phantom of some buried joy ; and yet hers is the heart which has been doomed to pine, in unmitigated sorrow, in order to minister to the pride of this passing pageantry. Here is the wasted form, whose strength has been evaporated over the task of cruelty assigned to it, in order that these sons and daughters of pleasure may have their hour of gaiety, and glitter beneath the torch-light kindled at Fashion's shrine. Let us turn from the passing equipages of wealth, and follow our suffering sister to the spot whither her sinking footsteps are hurrying. Poor, disheartened, shrinking creature ! Thou needest not start with terror : the eye which is upon thee is not that of the lurking seducer, refuse of humanity ! it is pitying respect which beholds thee. How would thy seared heart beat with hope and returning gladness, couldst thou but be assured of this !

The glittering throng is passed. The retired street is gained ; or, it may be, a more pretending locale, for in such are often found the "*Magasins des Modes*," with a frontage-splendour which but mocks the lofty attic or out-door building, the seat of long-plied toil and labour.

The young "dress-maker" enters the bourne of her hasty walk ; and hasty, indeed, has it been. The season of her apprenticeship has expired ; she now ranks as an improver ; her time is no longer her own ; and, therefore, even a temporary absence from the scene of her almost incessant toil, is an event nearly unknown to her. Eighteen summers have scarcely passed her by, yet is her frame bent by premature debility ; the elasticity of youth and the bloom of health are gone, and, in their place, the haggard look of decay has settled on her worn and pallid face ; the hopeless air of civic slavery is thrown around her wasted form. Different, indeed, was the prospect of her childhood. Born in a happy and healthful country home, until death sundered the parental tie, and changed circumstances obliged her to look to her own labour, as a source of support. She knew of toil and

travail but in name. It is otherwise now ; witness the scene she has entered. The contrast, so far as regards brightness of light, in the night season, is indeed complete ; but this dazzling change is too dearly purchased, the few remaining particles of wholesome atmospheric air being totally consumed by the gas-lights which flame overhead.

But why, after the almost unexampled indulgence of an hour's walk in the city air, has the work dropped from her motionless fingers ? Is it so, indeed ? Yes, goaded and jaded nature has sunk beneath its load—she faints. And well may spirit, as well as body, now sink. The hour's walk has revealed a truth, the bare contemplation of which, in prospect, had given her unspeakable anguish of heart. One surviving earthly relation she had hitherto known—not a mother, but one who, in seasons of sickness and sorrow, by counsel and care, had endeavoured to act a mother's part. She is dead, and, with her, earthly hope seems also to die. Hence mind and body are prostrated. The faint passes over ; it is too accustomed an event in the dim and stifling work-room, to attract much notice, and the task is again plied. That task is, however, one of more than ordinary urgency—it is “ Court mourning,” and our sufferer passes the midnight hour, still bowed down over it. Morning, a city morning, casts its dubious dawn over the unwholesome room, and still the task proceeds, the hapless daughters of toil, or, rather, some of the weakest and most exhausted of the party, having, by special indulgence, enjoyed a broken slumber of some half-hour's duration, among the “ cuttings ” which lie on the floor.

This has been the last day of the “ dress-maker's ” wearisome week. It is now the Sabbath. Its noon is approaching ; and the fair and courtly customers of the establishment of which our sufferer is an inmate, are anxiously awaiting the arrival of the mourning dresses, without which they cannot appear in public. They are gratified : the costly equipages, with crape-clad and liveried attendants, roll to their usual Sunday destinations. The funeral-anthem and sermon are enjoyed and descanted on. All this is well, it may be ; but where is the mourner whom we left heart-sick and faint in the still crowded and busy work-room ? She, too, has

been abroad, for it is Sunday ; and that work-room, at least during the afternoon of the day of rest, is generally void of its inmates. How, indeed, can it be otherwise ? The proprietors have gone forth to enjoy somewhat of "the fresh air," at their suburban villa ; after having, perhaps, received the usual gratification of attending the ministrations of their favourite preacher in the fashionable chapel, so that "dinner" is dispensed with for that day at their town establishment, and the apprentices and improvers are permitted to enjoy themselves during the afternoon.*

Morning arrives once more, and its sixth hour finds her with head bowed down, pained back, swollen limbs, and straining eyes, at the allotted task. For how long a period, and with what results this bondage is likely to continue, our reader's imagination may readily determine.

The above is a sketch, it is true ; but it is, nevertheless, a sketch from life. Its colouring is dark, but the subject demands this ; nay, if the truth must needs be told, there are shades which might be added to this already soul-harrowing picture, of a still darker hue. The sufferings contemplated have been, in a great measure, bodily ; or, at least, they may be viewed as bounded by time. But are there none connected with the moral and spiritual condition of the "dress-maker ?" What human pen could venture upon the description of those feelings which crowd upon the spirit of this victim of the work-room, when the closing hour draws nigh ? What skill could analyse the fearful mental struggle which has been undergone, before the habit of Sabbath-desecration has been forced upon her once sensitively moral feelings, as to this point of God's holy law ? Dark as is the outline, the filling up of such a sketch is infinitely more so.

Kind reader, you are now invited to test the reality of the picture presented. Trust not to the glossed exterior of an artificial or metropolitan existence ; but peruse with attention the following reference to undoubted fact, and

* When the Parliamentary inquiry took place, it was shown that, in some establishments, no dinner was provided on Sunday. The Committee are happy to state, it is believed that no such instances now occur.

then judge whether an undue demand is made on your sympathy and exertions in behalf of your oppressed sisters in a common humanity.

To much that has been stated, it may, perhaps, be replied, that theory predominates over fact. It is, therefore, most desirable that somewhat of the latter, and that of an incontrovertible kind, may be furnished, in confirmation of the views above given; and here, alas! the materials are fearfully ample, the chief difficulty being that of selection and condensation. A few extracts from a valuable and voluminous body of evidence, collected for the "Children's Employment Commission" (1841), by R. D. Grainger, Esq., will suffice our present purpose. They occur under the head of "London Dress-makers and Milliners," and refer to a class which, although not previously touched upon in this essay, contains within it sufferers to a still more lamentable extent than those who have come under our review. The testimony, in every instance, it may be observed, was given by the individuals themselves, each declaring their readiness to confirm what has been thus stated on oath. The following is the statement of one young person (No. 531) seventeen years old:—

"Served an apprenticeship of two years at Norwich. Paid a premium of £50. The regular hours at Norwich were from 8 a.m. till 9 p.m. in the winter; in the summer, from 7 a.m. till 9 and 10 p.m. Sometimes worked till 10 or 12; has done this for two or three nights together; never worked all night. Plenty of time was allowed for meals; was never hurried.

"Came to London as an improver last season, because she had not been properly taught in the country: came for eighteen months, did not pay any premium; receives no wages, but is boarded and lodged. Has sufficient food, but it is of an ordinary or rather coarse quality. The hours in the season are from half-past 6 a.m. till 12 at night, frequently till 1 or 2 in the morning. The work has been carried on in this house all night, but not since witness has been there. On Saturday night they are never out of the room earlier than 12. They begin on Monday morning at the usual hour, half-past 6. The proprietor keeps only four young persons, to do work which would occupy eight, and the consequence is, that the interval of the two seasons of winter and spring, where, in many houses,

there is comparatively easy work, in this there is little or none. In these intervals the hours are from half-past 6 a.m. till 7, 8, 11, and 12. Had a fortnight's holiday after the season of last year.

"No fixed time is allowed for the meals, which are very hurried; is never allowed more than ten minutes or a quarter of an hour for dinner. Was told last season that she ought to take her breakfast standing: and almost every morning she was scolded for being too long at meals. Has black looks for dining at the house on Sunday: it is considered a 'great favour.' Witness's health has very much suffered since she has been in town. Has often sick head-ache; her back aches from sitting so long; her appetite at times is very bad. The work-room is very cold in the winter, and full of draughts. This winter her hands, especially one, got benumbed and blue, so that the work has dropped from them: was never in this state previously. Has often complained of a mist before her eyes, which comes on for some minutes so that she cannot see her work. Would be very glad if the hours could be shortened; 'indeed she would.' Does not think she will be able to stand it much longer."

In the midst of such revolting statements as the above, in this body of evidence, it is refreshing to find some of a very opposite character. Thus, it is stated of one establishment (fol. 211) as follows:—

"In this establishment the young persons are most kindly treated, every attention being paid to their comfort. The hours are also comparatively moderate, and the health of the young apprentices is consulted in the busy season, by their being allowed to retire to rest earlier than the others."

But the eye is not long suffered to rest on such a relieving picture as this; the dark reverse too soon occurs. The following testimony, from a female of respectability, (No. 547,) speaks for itself:—

"Has been well acquainted with the dress-making and millinery business for several years; has had an establishment of her own for some years. During this period has known a large number of young persons who have been employed in various houses in London and the large country towns. Thinks that the business in some country towns is quite as laborious as in London, especially in the fashionable watering-places: this is principally owing to their having too few hands. Some years ago a young person came to witness, whose health was broken up from hard work at Bath. She

had ulcers of the legs, and she left in such a state of health that there was no hope of her recovery. This young woman told witness that she had at night often 'lain down on the rug, because the time for rest was so short it was not worth while going to bed.' She attributed the ulcers of the legs to catching cold on one of these occasions.

"In the London houses it is common, in the season, to work till 12, 1, or 2 in the morning, and frequently later, if anything is wanted; it is not unusual to work as late as 3 or 4 on Sunday morning, or even till 11 and 12 in the day. Has often seen the boys go by with boxes of millinery on Sunday mornings, at 10, 11, and 12. Knows that in the season the work is, in most of the principal houses, carried on from between 8 and 9 a.m., till 11 and 12 at night, for two or three months together, often later. The young persons have often complained to witness of the effects on their health. Has frequently known the constitution to be seriously impaired, so that they are constantly taking medicine. Attributes this to long hours of work, long sitting, and want of rest, occurring in young persons, of the age of fourteen to twenty. In some of the large houses, the bed-rooms are too much crowded, which witness thinks is very injurious. The work-rooms are also often much crowded. Would not like to put a daughter of hers to the business. Thinks that if all the houses were restricted from 9 a.m. till 9 p.m., that it would be most beneficial, and not injurious to the trade. Witness herself very rarely exceeds 9 p.m. Never 10 p.m., in the busiest time. Never begins earlier than half-past 8 a.m., often later. 'Thinks, from what she has known, that no slavery is worse than that of the dressmaker's life in London; this is her firm opinion.'"

One other painful illustration may suffice. (No. 585.)

"Has been first hand, or superintendent, of the dressmaking department in a large establishment in London; has also been in other houses of business. In all these houses the hours are very late, in the season; and in many the food is very bad, often coarse. Before the 'drawing-room,' whilst witness was at a French house, has sat up two or three alternate nights in the week. At another house, where there were four or five young persons in the same sleeping-room, the witness often came at 4 or 5 in the morning, and said it was time for them to get up. They continued till 12 or 1 at night. On Saturday night, has very often been kept up till 1 or 2 on Sunday morning; having begun at 4 or 5 a.m. on the Saturday. This was because there was Sunday to rest. Has heard from young

persons, who had been at a house in Leamington, that there they got up at 12 on Sunday nights to begin to work. The food is, to witness's knowledge, often coarse and insufficient. At one house, where they began at 4 or 5 a.m., the breakfast was not taken till half-past 7. On these occasions felt weak and exhausted."

No. 525. f. 204. Miss H. B. "Is in business as a milliner, and has been altogether acquainted with the business several years. . . . The journeywomen and improvers are worked the longest; the apprentices, being beginners, and not knowing the business so well, are sent to bed earlier. Has been herself in several houses in London. . . . In the houses which are regulated, by which is meant those which do not make a practice of working all night, it happens that if any particular order is to be executed, they go on later than 11, often till 2 or 3 in the morning, and, if requisite, all night. In those houses which are not so well regulated, they often work all night; in the season they often go on till '1 or 2 in the morning. In one establishment, where witness formerly worked, during three months successively, she had never more than four hours' rest, regularly going to bed between 12 and 1, and getting up at 4 in the morning. On the occasion of the general mourning for his Majesty King William IV., witness worked without going to bed from 4 o'clock on Thursday morning, till half-past 10 on Sunday morning; during this time witness did not sleep at all; of this she is certain. In order to keep awake she stood nearly the whole of Friday night, Saturday, and Saturday night, only sitting down for half-an-hour of rest. Two other young persons worked at the same house for the same time: these two dozed occasionally in a chair. Witness, who was then nineteen, was made very ill by this great exertion, and when, on Sunday, she went to bed, she could not sleep. Her feet and legs were much swelled, and her feet seemed to overhang her shoes. No difference is made as to the time of beginning in the morning, when the work has been carried on very late the night before. In some houses they work on the Sunday."

No. 528. C. D. "The common hours in this establishment in the Spring season, are from 8 a.m. till 1 or 2 the next morning, often till 4 or 5. If they work till 4 or 5, they get up to work at 8 a.m., as usual. It may frequently happen that for three or four days in the week, the hours are from 8 a.m. till 1, 2, 4, and 5 the next morning. It is almost invariably the case that the work is carried on all night, on the night before court days. . . . When witness was an apprentice, has sometimes lain down on the rug and slept a few minutes, till she was called. . . . Knows that there

are several houses in London, in which no meals are allowed on Sunday, after breakfast. It is expected that they should obtain a dinner from their friends. Knows a young person who walked about the streets all day, in consequence of having been denied a dinner at her employer's. No exception is made in favour of those who have no friends in London. All the workwomen, in the season, about fifty, work in one large room. In the season, with the sun in the day, and the lamps at night, the place is extremely hot and oppressive. Several young persons have fainted at their work. The sight is frequently affected." . . .

No. 529. Miss — . . . "Every season, in at least half the houses of business, it happens that the young persons occasionally work 20 hours out of the 24, twice or thrice a week. On special occasions, such as drawing-rooms, general mournings, and very frequently wedding orders, it is not uncommon to work all night: has herself worked twenty hours out of the twenty-four, for three months together; at this time she was suffering from illness, and the medical attendant remonstrated against the treatment she received. He wished witness to remain in bed at least one day longer, which the employers objected to, required her to get up, and dismissed the surgeon. . . . Has seen young persons faint immediately after the work was over, the stimulus or excitement which had sustained them having ceased. The digestion especially suffers, and also the lungs; pain in the side is very common, and the hands and feet die away from want of circulation and exercise, 'never seeing the outside of the door, from Sunday to Sunday.' "

And now, we ask, will the inhabitants of this professedly free country permit such a system of slavery to continue in the very heart of our population? Were these individual cases, selected almost at random from the mass of recorded misery and degradation just appealed to, the only ones which the spirit of Christian philanthropy—still, thank God, alive among us—was called upon to redress, ought they not to be sought out, and placed before the cognisance of the country, until that redress was amply achieved? This, however, is far from being a full statement of our case: our duty is to bring forward not such isolated instances as these, but an aggregate of sorrow, the very conception of which is startling. To do any measure of justice to the subject, it must be thus reviewed; and, if calmly considered, will, we feel

persuaded, force conviction, even upon the hitherto incredulous, that from London, and this country generally, in this our day, a cry from the oppressed ascends into the ears of the Lord of Hosts, hardly less aggravated, in many instances, than that which resounded in the prison-house of Egyptian bondage.

CHAPTER III.

AN EVIL SYSTEM.

“ Here, perhaps,
Some advantageous act may be achieved
By sudden onset ; either with hell-fire
To waste his whole creation ; or possess
All as our own.”

Paradise Lost, Book II., 362.

OUR statement amounts to this : that an evil system is at work regarding a most valuable and industrious class of our fellow-beings, to say nothing of their sex, age, and condition ; we mean the “ milliners and dressmakers of Great Britain.” In London, of course, where all things, good and evil, reach their acme, this system is in most active and fearful operation ; but the ramifications of it extend, there is too good reason to fear, throughout our entire population. Our painful duty shall now be, so far as the limits of a few pages will permit, to expose some of the most glaring of the wrongs to which the class above referred to are forced to submit.

It must be evident, even at a glance, that the number of these individuals is great. The nearest calculation to be relied on is above 15,000, for London. Without, however, the aid of statistical tables, in the metropolis alone, how vast and increasing must these numbers be, when we reflect upon the enormous demand for attire, grave and gay, which is to clothe the female portion of a population up to, if not exceeding, two millions ; not to speak of many parts of the dress belonging to the males of this enormous multitude which are also manufactured by female hands.

In the trade of dress-making, as in every other known

occupation of the day, a vast amount of competition exists, and here, indeed, in a great measure, lies the root of the evil. In this article of commercial intercourse, as in others, there are some "who will be rich," some, too, who have more tact and skill, or more capital, than their neighbours; and forthwith commences that "pushing of their business" which, at first, employing only fair means, often ends in enterprises and expedients, ruinous not alone to the dependants and employed, but finally to the projectors themselves.

The parties here to be considered, naturally divide themselves into the *capitalists* or *employers*, and the *employed*; which latter class consists of a large body of *apprentices*, and a still larger one of *assistants*. Concerning the first-mentioned persons, in the mass, we would be far from speaking disrespectfully or reproachfully. We have no doubt that many of the excellent of the earth are to be found among them; while we are, alas! equally certain that some are to be ranked among the most cruel oppressors of their kind. The ultimate blame, however, of the evil, is not, as we hope shortly to show, lying even at their door. It rests with the thoughtless and irreligious portion of the community; whose code of action, founded on the arbitrary whim of fashion, instead of God's word, leads them to act towards, and to exact from, those dependent upon them, in such a way as to prove that the religion which they profess is worse than a nullity. This blame is ultimately at the account of the nation at large, which, in its vast strides after literary, scientific, military, and commercial renown, has overlooked or broken some of the tenderest ties and highest claims which nature, or rather the God of nature, has bound upon all. Such, undoubtedly, are the claims of female artisans; but let us hope—now that the wings of England's genius of conquest seem well-nigh wearied in their flight over our globe—now that science seems to demand a pause and respite from her all but super-human researches, and for her over-wrought mind—Britain may, at length, condescend to these meaner, though not less momentous matters, and hearken to the voice of reason, humanity—nay, of God himself,—asserting the rights of his own bond-women.

With regard to the numerous class of milliners' and dress-makers' *apprentices*, we have reason to be apprehensive, even from the rapid glance at the evidence above quoted, that the voice of public opinion, if not the interference of legal scrutiny and enactment, is much required. In many instances, in the Metropolis, a large fee, varying from £30 to £60, is required at their entrance on the business. If board and lodging be stipulated for during their apprenticeship, it is evident, notwithstanding, that, after one or two years, the labour of their hands, in almost every instance, would fully, and more than repay this cost; so that, from this period their connexion with the party to whom they have been indentured is a matter of clear gain. We conceive, then, that they are fully entitled to respect, tenderness, and parental care; and is it so? Let those who feel as deeply as they ought in the matter, inquire into the secret history of some of our large establishments, and they will find that the pallid countenances and declining strength, and often the premature death, of many of these apprentices, are the direct and necessary results of over-working, and unseasonable hours. We are disposed to dwell at less length on this branch of the subject, because the remedy of these evils is apparent. Existing laws provide for the protection of articulated apprentices: perhaps even here an amendment may be, to some extent, required; but, if sought, it would doubtless be obtained. But, even as our law at present stands, let all such indentures be legally and accurately executed; and in case of any flagrant breach of such stipulations, many of which might, we fear, be but too readily found, let the authority of the magistrate be appealed to, and after one or two exposures of this kind, we venture to predict that the rights of these young and often injured persons will be more generally respected.

The other more numerous, and, we believe, far more aggrieved class, demand a stricter attention; we allude to *milliners' and dress-makers' assistants*. Their hands and their labour are, it is true, at the close of their apprenticeships, their own, and yet there it is that real slavery begins. The limits of an essay forbid very detailed proof of the misery to

which this class are subjected, although the highest evidence as to the fact is unhappily at hand.

We designedly pass over the miserable remuneration in many instances afforded, so low as at the rate of *one penny* for the making of a shirt, as not strictly within this essay, and yet such is the case. We confine ourselves to another fact ; one which stands on record before the public upon unimpeached authority, and it is a startling one. What think our readers are the allotted periods of labour for these persons—the average number of hours of their close and laborious employment? Twelve, it is generally known, is the constant number out of the twenty-four : this, however, is not all. In one of the most striking and awakening publications of the day, “*The Perils of the Nation*,” it is stated, and stands uncontradicted, that in London it is a common habit to oblige “*dress-makers*” to work without almost any cessation *sixteen hours* in the day, and at times that they are known to labour for *FORTY continuous hours* !* And how have the announcement and reiteration of this fact told on the public mind? A few noble Christian spirits, gifted with a share of that energy which the constraining love of the Saviour is sure to afford, strive and struggle to roll from the country of their birth so foul a disgrace ; a few of the less powerful, so to strive, weep in secret over the sorrows of their sisters : yet, still the nation, as such, is passive. The great machines of state and commercial affairs roll on their way,—the means for carrying forth the gospel to those who have never yet heard it, or for liberating from bondage the limbs of the negro, are supplied ; while, hitherto, no effort on a national, or even on any tolerably large scale, has been made to reach those scenes of sorrow and suffering, and others, where the worn-out slave of fashionable demands, pines and droops in hopeless misery ; and that slave, *a woman* ! Brethren, these things ought not to be—they must not be. Let us, in order, through the blessing of God, to be stirred up the more to her emancipation, examine a little more closely the consequences of her condition.

* These statements are fully borne out, nay, more than confirmed, by the evidence already quoted.

CHAPTER IV.

EVIL RESULTS.

" My ear is pain'd,
My soul is sick, with every day's report
Of wrong and outrage, with which earth is fill'd.
There is no flesh in man's obdurate heart ;
It does not feel for man : the natural bond
Of brotherhood is sever'd as the flax,
That falls asunder at the touch of fire." COWPER.

WE may commence this sad review, by contemplating the *physical* evils to which our sufferer is exposed. The nature of the apartments in which city "dress-makers," in general, work, has been already glanced at. They are often small, crowded, and almost never properly ventilated. Such abodes are seldom entirely cleared of their toiling occupants ; and the delicacy of their naturally fragile frames, rendered doubly so by confinement, as well as their often insufficient clothing, preclude the possibility of admitting currents even of such air as a densely inhabited city locality affords. Here is the first and secret avenue for disease, aye, and for disease in one of its deadliest forms. Who knows not the tendency, so frequently existing, in our sisters and daughters, just arriving at womanhood, to imbibe the seeds of pulmonary complaints ? How anxiously does the affectionate parent watch the first failing of appetite—the first phthisical cough—and bear his beloved child to our own southern shores, or to the still more genial Italian climate ? And often, even with all this care, the lovely and tender plant droops and dies, defeating these efforts of parental affection, backed by all the resources of medical skill.

Look now at our poor "dress-maker." She too, perhaps, in earlier and better days, has known a father's care, and the blessings of a healthful, or even an elegant abode. Now almost the entire of her existence is spent in a room, never, perhaps, visited by the air of heaven, little by its light. The atmosphere here is rendered still further unfit for the purposes of respiration, from the heat generated by perpetually-burning gaslights; and the few portions of pure air which find their way into it are inhaled and respired by so many human beings, crowded within the stinted space, that at length each breath is a burdensome vapour, fraught with infection. What else can it be? and what chance, humanly speaking, can the tender organs of a young and delicate female have of escaping disease, in such a case? Add to this, that should incipient disease, even of a fatal tendency, manifest itself, not only are almost the common means of medical relief precluded, by the unhappy circumstances in which the sufferer is placed, but the very alleviating sympathies of the humblest domestic circle denied; and then say, can anything, short of a kind of miracle, stay her descent to an early grave?

Before leaving this part of our melancholy review, it may be well to add a few facts, respecting the ravages of consumption in the metropolis alone. For this purpose, it is merely necessary to consult some of the accredited "Bills of Mortality" in London. The writer has collated a few of these, and the following may be taken as a specimen. Out of twelve such weekly reports, taken from the "London Medical and Surgical Journal," for 1834-5, a period not marked by any special fatality, from November in the former year to February in the latter, just three months, and, from an average of the deaths resulting from about forty diseases enumerated, we find that the highest, in the proportion of almost double any other, is "*consumption*," the next being "*age and debility*." The numbers for the period above-mentioned, stands thus:—

AGE AND DEBILITY.	CONSUMPTION.	TOTAL FOR ALL DISEASES.
716	1116	6231 <i>deaths</i> .

Thus it appears, that about one-sixth of those who fall

the victims, in London, to the almost countless forms of disease to which humanity is heir, sink beneath the dire form of it in question. Later inquiries may present a still higher average; but the design of the present treatise precludes such; nor are they, indeed, necessary. Can we for a moment doubt, that the ~~most~~ ^{most} ~~up~~ ^{up} ~~and~~ ^{and} suffocating unwholesome establishments under review contribute, in an overwhelming proportion, to swell these numbers?

Consumption is, however, but ~~one form~~ of disease, whose inroads beset the sedentary occupants of the work room. Appetite ~~first~~, and then all the ~~digestive~~ powers, must inevitably give way to the treatment to which their organs are exposed. Untimely, irregular, ill-prepared, and, too often, scanty meals, are not those whereon a young and delicate stomach can subsist, and perform its necessary functions. This organ once deranged, disease sets in with forms as fearful as they are numerous. It is not the writer's wish to harrow the feelings of those whose eye may fall upon this essay; and yet hardly any measure of justice can be done to the painful subject under review, without some such reference. A few medical authorities, at least, may be quoted, the only difficulty being that of selection, where the evidence is, alas! so abundant.

"Insufficient ventilation and confinement," says Copland, "affect our youth of both sexes: although, to a superficial observer, they may seem healthy in countenance, yet are their limbs generally deformed, their growth stunted, and themselves incapable of making much progress in education." Sir A. Cooper's testimony is the same. "The effect of confinement," he states, "is not only to stunt the growth, but to produce deformity." The opinion of a truly excellent and eminent physician, in extensive practice in one of our largest manufacturing towns, and given at the request of the writer, is so full and to the purpose, that he cannot forbear transcribing it.* It is to the following effect:—

"Perhaps no position, if long continued, is more injurious

* The physician above referred to is Dr. H. Purdon, Belfast, whose statements are grounded on the experience of twenty years, and an acquaintance, during this period, with the sufferings of the manufacturing poor in that populous town.

to health than that of sitting. The artisans who practise it from infancy, very rarely enjoy a vigorous constitution. 'Sedentary habits,' says Patissien, 'usually cause the lymphatic to predominate over the muscular, nervous, or sanguiferous systems.' Hence scrofula, rickets, cachexia, pains in the back, hæmorrhoidal complaints, and various functional disorders, are among the most common effects of such habits, including obstinate headache, indigestion with all its train of attendant evils. Disease of the liver is almost sure to follow, and too often consumption, induced, in the first instance, by the want of air and exercise, rendering the whole system unhealthy, so that what, in another case, might prove but a simple cold, runs on, in a debilitated frame, to that most fatal, and, alas! too prevalent disease."

"I can testify," the same authority adds, "to the number of scrofulous affections which have come before me from the factories, as well as indigestion, in the class of sempstresses—neuralgia, general delicacy, loss of sight, or greatly-impaired vision, &c."

Scrofula has been prominently referred to, on the above competent authority; and as this disease forms the basis of so many others, it may be well to show, briefly, to what extent its ravages, among the class of sufferers under consideration, may be fairly calculated. In an able article on scrofulous complaints, which appeared originally in the "Dublin Journal of Medical Science" (No. XV., vol. v.), by an eminent physician (James Eager, M.D.), whose experience was gathered from extensive practice in Paris, as well as in his own country, we have the following:—

"I have questioned very attentively the parents of seventy-four scrofulous children, and learned that, of this number, fifty-six lived in low houses, with very small windows, on the ground floor, where the direct rays of the sun never penetrated, and in which, though very small, five or six persons slept. The remaining eighteen belonged to individuals in better circumstances, and, although consequently better nourished, were, in every other respect, in the same condition as the fifty-six. They were subjected to great privations, and lived in rooms exposed to the north. These circumstances

augmented the predisposition, and frequently brought on the disease, in cases where the predisposition did not exist."

"Many causes," continues Dr. Eager, "are said to originate scrofula. The continued action of a cold and moist air is, with many authors, the principal one. *I have abundant reason to think that the absence of the direct solar rays, and a long sojourn in confined atmosphere, contribute more than any other toward the development of scrofula.*" The above view is confirmed by the following appeal to fact, in the same paper: its interest, as well as direct bearing on the case, before us, must plead for the introduction of a lengthened extract. "The poorer classes in Palermo live on the most miserable food, and in filth and poverty; now, if these causes were what is generally ascribed to them, these people ought to suffer from scrofula. The contrary is, however, the case, and it is remarkable that they live in the open air. What are we to infer, but that, notwithstanding their poverty, &c., &c., their breathing pure air exempts them from scrofula? In a word, I am satisfied that neither cold, moist air, nor too nutritious food, nor poor food, nor inflammation, suffice to induce this disease, without the action of foul air, and the effect of the absence of the direct rays of the sun. Were this fact well established, of what importance would it not be to the manufacturing districts in our country, where this malady is so prevalent? From it would follow the necessity of keeping children, and other labouring persons, in well-ventilated and well-situated factories."

It may appear that a sufficiency of medical testimony has been afforded; but there is one other declaration on this subject, so full, and from such high authority, that the writer cannot forbear annexing it. The document referred to is a letter from Sir James Clark, Bart., Physician to the Queen, and is given in the volume from which so many extracts have been already made—Report of R. D. Grainger, Esq., p. 532.

"The effects which I have observed upon the health of girls employed in dress-making and millinery have been a relaxed, enfeebled state of the whole system, a pale cachectic look, indigestion, &c. Such has been the condition of the

young dress-makers whom I have seen, and such will invariably be the effect upon the health of young persons confined in ill-ventilated apartments night and day, over-worked, and deprived of exercise in the open air. I have generally questioned these poor girls on their mode of life, and have found it such as no constitution could long bear. Worked from six in the morning till twelve at night, with the exception of the short intervals allowed for their meals, in close rooms, and passing the few hours allowed for rest in still more close and crowded apartments—a mode of life more completely calculated to destroy human health could scarcely be contrived, and this at a period of life when exercise in the open air, and a due proportion of rest, are essential to the development of the system. Judging from what I have observed and heard, I scarcely believe that the system adopted in our worst-regulated manufactories can be so destructive of health as the life of the young dress-maker; and I have long been most anxious to see something done to rescue these unfortunate girls from the slavery to which they are subjected.

“(Signed,) JAMES CLARK.”

While penning these lines, the writer's personal recollection is forcibly recalled to *two cases*, of many which in the course of a few months came before him. One was that of a most interesting young girl, cut down in the midst of agonising suffering, by an acute disease (“Tympanitis”), and, on inquiring into particulars, this malady was clearly traced to the exorbitant demands on her time and strength, made by the mistress to whom, as a dress-maker, she was apprenticed.

The other case referred to was even still more painful. Through the sympathy of some Christian friends, who had discerned her abode of want, in one of our provincial towns, the writer was led to visit a young and lovely female, dying of consumption. She was the daughter of a widow; one, too, who had known better days. Their residence was a type of many others in the same place: clean, but cold and comfortless; denuded of almost every article which could be

spared, in order to purchase the means of protracting a suffering existence. This girl was also a milliner's apprentice. Human aid came far too late to arrest death; all that the most consummate medical skill, or the tenderest human sympathy, could effect, was to smooth the pathway to the grave, and point to the hope beyond it. She died. On an inquiry being made into her previous history, many painful facts came to light, and among others, this one: that she had toiled hard for weeks and months, endeavouring to do justice to her mistress, and to learn for herself a future means of support, working, at an average, twelve hours daily, often far more, her only substance having been, frequently, *one meal of water-gruel* during that time. Oh, reader! when pondering upon this single fact, remember, that although the sorrows of this daughter of affliction are at an end, many successors to her are even now treading the same dark pathway to the grave; and resolve, in God's name, to do something in their behalf.

We come now to touch upon some of the *moral* evils which haunt the steps of these young persons; nor can this branch of the subject be better handled than by specifying some which form, so to speak, an intermediate link between these and the physical ills above described.

We hold it to be an axiom in the social system, that there is no great physical evil, which is not productive of a concomitant moral mischief; a position, the truth of which would be amply confirmed by a reference to the present state of the great centres of manufacturing enterprise, where bodily suffering and mental demoralisation have, but in too many instances, attained their climax. How, indeed, is it possible, that those higher affections and aspirations, which constitute, at once, the charm and the safeguard of our spiritual nature, should remain unscathed, in the midst of a toil which exhausts the bodily frame, and prostrates all the energies of the mind? One, and not, the least, of the injurious results of the system we have described, is the mutual indifference and discontent generated between the employer and the employed; a state of things peculiarly unhappy in a business where the repeated anxieties and disappointments experienced by the former,

and the inordinate demands made on the endurance of the latter, call for the ministration of all the kindlier and more generous sentiments of our common nature. How often has the cup of bitterness been made to overflow from the absence of that sympathy which is so consolatory to all, but especially to the female heart, in the time of trial and suffering: is it too much to infer, that, when the whole destiny of an immortal being, for good or evil, has hung suspended on the balance, one unkind word, one undeserved reproach, may have caused the scale to turn, and a life of virtue to fall beneath the insidious attacks of licentious profligacy.

We shall not, however, venture to follow, even in imagination, the hapless victim of a system thus fraught with danger and temptation: rather would we draw a veil over this painful part of the subject; nevertheless, the fact cannot be denied, that the ranks of that fearful occupation which forms, as it were, the border-line between earth and hell—where woman is found treading most closely in the steps of her first parent in sin; and, therefore, bearing, with a thousand-fold accumulation, sin's curse and consequences—are but too often recruited from some of the class of females whose case is before us.

Far would we be from asserting, that this is the inevitable or even general lot of the “dress-maker.” God forbid! Some, we would hope many, of this class, under favouring circumstances, attain to comparative comfort and happiness. We feel assured, too, that for one who yields to sin, in the deplorable form above alluded to, hundreds, thousands, prefer to pine in poverty, and die the death of the abject and heart-stricken. This consideration, however, is calculated to diminish neither the danger of the one nor the misery of the other.

Still, let us look again at the class of assistant dress-makers under the most favourable circumstances. Suppose them preserved from these dangers and temptations, or at least overcoming them, and what hope or prospect is there of their filling the place in society which the Sovereign Ruler of creation and of providence designed, in love, that they should? What reasonable expectation can there be that

their powers—bodily, mental, moral—should so develop themselves as He originally planned? What hopeful elements in the poor, wasted, and worn dress-maker, of the future wife, mother, friend? Alas! alas! like the frost-bitten flower of spring-tide, every opening promise of this kind receives too sure a blight: how mournful to see, in her whom God formed as a blessing to society, at best, only a burden to self, and pitying friends!

Beyond and above all, how can we entertain a rational hope that the great concerns of the soul and of eternity shall be cared for? The Sabbath, with its rest and its ordinances, are to her, instead of a blessing, a sore temptation to eke out her livelihood, along with her allotted toil; or else to seek a momentary pause in her career of task-work, at the expense of a breach of God's most binding law. In a word, if the physical evils attendant on this state of bondage be aggravated, so are its moral and spiritual ones. If the one lead the heart where even philanthropy dwells, to mourn over the "dress-maker's" earthly lot, the others may cause the Christian to weep bitter tears of sorrow and apprehension, as her prospect for eternity unfolds itself.

CHAPTER V.

THE REMEDY.

“God made all his creatures free ;
Life itself is liberty ;
God ordained no other bands
Than united hearts and hands.” JAMES MONTGOMERY.

PAINFUL it is to behold one dear to us, or even a complete stranger, on the bed of languishing, when all hope of recovery has ceased. Not so, however, to the same amount, although the mind may, at times, fluctuate between hope and fear, when the case is remediable. It is this ultimate prospect of recovery, or even alleviation, which bears the philanthropic physician through so much that is trying in his office ; that enables him to apply remedies often painful ; that nerves his hand, even when the searching probe or keen lancet is in use. Such, in a measure, are the feelings which have borne us through the foregoing review of the evils accompanying so large a proportion of our female population, in their necessary employment. We cannot but be sensible of deeply-rooted social disease—national, almost, in magnitude—yet dare we to hope that a remedy may be suggested. To this more grateful task would we now address ourselves, with the humble yet earnest prayer, that it may please the alone Sovereign Physician to vouchsafe His blessing.

Although the evils which have just passed under review are serious, indeed, moral as well as physical, there is yet, among others, one consoling thought connected with that part of the subject before us, namely, that the remedies most likely, through the Divine blessing, to be effectual, are of a com-

paratively simple nature, and, if attempted, *capable of speedy application*. Those to be here suggested shall, for the sake of brevity and perspicuity, be classed under a few distinctive heads.

I. LEGISLATIVE ENACTMENT. Were the case an ordinary one, or admitting of delay sufficient to await the unerring influence of that great and sovereign remedy for all moral evil, *the Gospel*,—or even of that acknowledged potent influence, the law of opinion,—an appeal to the Legislature should not, most certainly, be put into this, the foremost place. We conceive, however, that an amount of evil is at work which demands a speedy remedy, even though not a sovereign, or the most effective one. Our country is still professedly Christian; nay, more—the Scriptures of truth, and the reformed faith, are the acknowledged substratum of our Constitution. Let, then, “the cry of the poor” enter into the ears of rulers, as it has, long ago, into those of the Lord of Sabaoth. To be brief: we earnestly desire enactment, and that speedily, to the following effect.

1. A “*ten-hours’ bill*,” with a special clause, if need be, to meet the case of “dress-makers,” and operatives of a similar class. It were quite beside the intent of the present treatise, to enter upon a question which has already, during the progress of weighty debates, occupied the attention of the senate-houses of Britain; all we would say is this: Whatever may seem to be the opinion of these houses, the voice of the country—of its intelligence, its morality, its religion—is for an authorised curtailment of the toil of the poor. It may be a difficult and a delicate matter for the Legislature arbitrarily to interfere, or even appear to do so, between the employer and the employed; but the question arises, “Is there not a cause?” We say that there is. Let but that godly nobleman, who has already won the best wishes and prayers of many a pining son and daughter of toil, persevere in his righteous efforts, and the day will come when generations now unborn, rescued from degradation, physical and intellectual, as well as moral and religious ruin, will bless the name of ASHLEY, even as the disenthralled negro, from his infant years, learns to lisp the praise of WILBERFORCE. We say it again,

If that race of Englishmen who won, and now enjoy, the world's mastery, is to be preserved a model of the Creator's highest skill, and not be permitted to degenerate into the worn and wasted refuse of the factory population, let us have a "ten-hours bill." This will protect all who labour, and throw the ægis of mercy over the "dress-maker," among the rest.

2. Let the *Sanitary Code* be especially attended to. It is almost presumptuous to hope that these lines should arrest the attention of those who hold the reins of rule among us; yet may we be permitted to give expression to an earnest prayer, that some from among that class could be induced, by personal inspection, to visit the abodes of want and woe, wherein so many of our city operatives spend their days. Would it not be practicable, now that a surplus of millions is found in the nation's exchequer, to meet the nation's wants, that some portion of this sum might be laid out upon bettering the condition of the poor, as regards their work-rooms and dwellings, their comfort, cleanliness, and recreations? and, most assuredly, one of the very first classes which demands attention in these particulars, is that one for whom we now plead.

II. Legislative enactment, however, on these points, we consider, after all, to be beneficial, in the highest and truest sense, only as preparing the way for, and giving greater efficacy to, MORAL AND RELIGIOUS INFLUENCE. Let us, for a moment or two, merge the interests of the "dress-maker," in those of our operative population generally; and this we do say, that if the bodily wants of this class, their physical wrongs and evils, are crying, their spiritual state is infinitely more so.

There is a view of the case, which we venture to give, so exceedingly strong, in our judgment, that we can hardly account for its having so long escaped notice. All are aware that a state provision, to a certain extent, for the maintenance of religion, exists among us; one which is coeval with our constitution itself, a constitutional inheritance, as it may be styled, for the clergy of the Established Church. Now it is apparent, that those on whom the burden of this provisionally

falls are the representatives of the *agrarian interest*, ultimately the lords of the soil. But does it not appear equally evident that since the settlement of this ecclesiastical revenue, the wealth of the country runs in other, if not quite different channels? Our manufacturing and commercial interests are now highest in the scale of national wealth; and would it be either unjust to these, or likely to result in anything but a blessing to the land which would so honour God, if a system of taxation for directly moral and religious purposes were here levied? This may seem strange or impertinent to some. The carrying out of such a principle may involve difficulties; and sure we are that it would; yet are we disposed to think, that if the principle of a state provision for the maintenance of religion be admitted, the modification of it which we have mentioned, is a righteous one, and that its assertion would issue in great blessing to our land.

Just to bring the matter to a practical bearing: Why, we ask, should not our mill-owners and factory-proprietors, and employers of hundreds of operative hands, be required to contribute to the moral and religious instruction of those in their employ? Can we contemplate the masses who crowd our manufacturing towns, "as sheep without a shepherd," in spiritual things, and not be seized with a feeling of awful apprehension? What a blessing would pastors, appointed specially to labour among such a population, prove! If our regiments and garrison-towns have their chaplains, why not our mills and factories theirs? And again, we say, those who draw their ample revenues, their princely fortunes, from the labour of the mechanic, should certainly contribute to his moral and spiritual amelioration; nor would that law be unjust which should render such contribution compulsory.

We have not, in all this, forgotten our "dress-maker." We would have her hours of labour shortened by legislative enactment, it is true; but we would also provide, and, if possible, by the same means, for her being enabled to spend the additional leisure hours, thus obtained, as becomes a rational and moral being. Never will the city-garret, where this our sister resides, be a safe or happy home, even though her hours of toil be authoritatively shortened, until its inmate

be brought under the influence of what alone can effectually bless—**THE GOSPEL**. Let, then, the foot of its messengers and ministers find its way to such abodes more frequently. May the government of our country be aroused to meet the spontaneous benevolence of the church of Christ by parallel efforts! and may the latter be kindled, into manifold energy, until the number of spiritual labourers among our dense city population be increased an hundred-fold! If, on the one hand, we would lift up our voice, and cry for a diminution of toil, and a shortening of its duration, as at present laid upon our oppressed operative population, especially those who are the “weaker vessels;” on the other, we would urge, and with equal earnestness, for the multiplication of ministers of the gospel, and an abundant increase of the means of grace. If the country is to maintain its rank among nations, as a Christian people, then must our fields and hamlets be more constantly crowned with the village church—the erection, too, of the state; and if our towns and cities are not speedily to become spiritual pest-houses, our few parish churches of olden date, and our modern chapels, with their locked-up and luxurious pews, must be accompanied by multiplied places of worship, with open doors and comfortable area, where the faithful and laborious minister of Christ may, like his Master, preach the gospel to the poor. Then, and then only, shall our sorrowing sister of the work-room not alone have a Sabbath to spend, but a means of spending it to the glory of God.

III. There is yet one other head of remedy, which is certainly of more speedy and simple, if not of more effectual application; and that is, **FEMALE INFLUENCE**. Much do we regret that the prescribed limits of this essay prevent our doing justice to this part of the subject; but the reflection consoles us, that if the eye of any of our Christian sisters has glanced over the preceding portion of it, the less needs here to be said: and still less will urgency of appeal be called for with any who may have given to the matters treated of their own personal and prayerful consideration.

“What, then,” do our female readers inquire, “can we

do to alleviate the sufferings of our sister, overburdened by the weight and duration of her toilsome employment?" We answer, "Much."

In the first instance, let Christian females of the upper circles render themselves better acquainted with the real condition of the class under consideration. How blessed and how beneficial would be the result of a little more familiarity of intercourse, properly and guardedly conducted, here and elsewhere! A visit to the lodging or the working place of the "dress-maker"—a few kind inquiries—a book lent—a word dropped—a judicious and well-timed loan of a small sum, in time of need—an introduction to acquaintances who might have it in their power to benefit—all, or any of these, though inconsiderable in themselves, would, far from impoverishing or incommoding the donor, greatly add to her own comfort, and prove an unspeakable benefit to the humbler party. In order that relief be brought to this much-neglected, and, as we believe, much-injured class, light must be let in on her abode and condition, and the above will prove the easiest, the best, and most blessed mode of so doing.

Again, Christian females in the higher, and even the middle classes, may do much to alleviate and entirely remove many of the most galling and grievous oppressions of the "dress-maker," in the way of over-working, and unduly extended hours of work, simply by providing that, through their means, such tasks may not of necessity be appointed her. The way of effecting this is very simple. Let not a dress, or a number of dresses, be ever ordered without a sufficient amount of time being allowed for their execution. A small degree of forethought and precaution, on the part of the employer, will easily accomplish this. Concerning the opposite, often unreasonable, and thoughtless line of conduct pursued, we fear, in too many cases, we shall only say that it is the very reverse of "doing as we would be done by."

Once more: let no female in the rank of an employer of others be ashamed to confess that Master whom she herself serves, in this matter. "Be ye, therefore, merciful," is His

rule ; and let his disciples exhibit its fulfilment, especially towards those of their own sex. A little inquiry, conducted as above hinted, will soon discover where oppressive burdens are inflicted, or exorbitant demands, in the way of time, made. Let the women of our land exhibit an honest indignation and disapproval of their conduct who would practise such. The approval and employment of those who act otherwise will soon tell, in a circle proportionably extensive to the rank and influence of the female whose Christian consistency may lead and enable her so to act. Such a becoming assertion of principle, and exhibition of feeling, would, we doubt not—sooner, perhaps, than any means within our reach—tend to check an evil so deeply rooted, and destructive in its effects, as that before us.

Above all, we would say to British females, to our sisters in the truth of the gospel, “PRAY.” Pray that the ills and sorrows of so large a portion of your own sex may move Him who is a God of power, as well as a God of love, to put forth his hand to their redress. Pray, also, Christian reader, that his blessing may be vouchsafed on *this humble effort* in his own cause, as well as that of so much-loved a portion of our common nature ; that the mite now cast into his treasury may not have been proffered in vain.

FINIS.

VENTILATION.

Extract from the Report of the Association on Ventilation.

"It is an ascertained fact, that in the process of respiration each individual gives off from the lungs a large quantity of air, loaded with carbonic acid; and also, that every gas-light or candle causes a similar deterioration, so that a poisonous atmosphere is thus produced, in which, in fact, if any animal were closely confined, it would instantly perish. These circumstances, although well-known to scientific persons, are either imperfectly understood, or entirely discredited by those who are uninformed upon the subject, and it is therefore desirable to state, that so rapidly do the effects just described take place, that in a work-room 32 feet long, 13 feet wide, and 10 feet high, containing five gas-lights, and in which twenty young persons are at work, one-eighth of the whole air of the room will, if not prevented by some kind of ventilation, be changed into poison in an hour. To guard against such deterioration as this, by which the air becomes unfit for respiration and for health, it is estimated that there should be a change per minute of at least three cubic feet of fresh air for each person, and of .16 feet for each ordinary gas-light, when burning, amounting—for the room above-mentioned—to 135 cubic feet per minute."

PLAN OF VENTILATION NO. I.

"The most complete plan comprises the air-pump, invented by Dr. Arnott, by which any quantity of pure air required can be introduced; the air thus introduced in the winter, previously to its distribution in the work-room, being warmed, by passing near or around a suitably prepared open fireplace, or a stove. A balanced valve ventilator, of Dr. Arnott's invention, is placed in an opening made into the chimney or chimneys, close to the ceiling, in order to carry off the impure and noxious air; this valve allows air to pass into the chimney, but prevents any return or issue of smoke: and lastly, to remove the large quantity of deteriorated air and heat generated by gas-lights, when these are employed, a metallic tube is carried from each burner into the chimney."

PLAN NO. II.

"The greater part of the evil may be removed, and the most beneficial results be, obtained by the following plan:—A balanced ventilator to be inserted in the chimney: a metallic tube to be attached to each gas-light, and opening into the chimney: an external aperture, regulated by a valve, to be made, communicating with air-ducts, formed by removing the skirting board a short distance from the wall, the slit or aperture being covered by perforated zinc: or fresh air may be admitted by inserting one or two ventilating panes in the window.*

PLAN NO. III.

"Lastly: In all cases where, from the small number of young persons employed, or other cause, neither of the preceding plans is adopted, considerable alleviation of the distress and exhaustion consequent upon long confinement in a heated and deteriorated atmosphere, may be effected by simply inserting into each chimney a balanced ventilator, which can be procured and fixed at a cost of from 10s. to 15s., and by taking care that the throat of the fireplace has a suitable register plate. In every instance in which this substitute is employed, it is strongly recommended that a tube should be carried from at least one of the gas-lights, when these are used, into the chimney, above the ventilator, so that during the summer, when there is no fire, a draught may be produced to carry off the impure air; and also that a window ventilator should be added."

* A specimen of this pane and chimney ventilator may be seen at the Office, Clifford-street.

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